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## SUCCESS STORY

# Iraqi Agriculture Fair Brings Hope

**Nearly 80,000 visitors attend Erbil Ag-Expo; Iraqis demonstrate commitment to draw foreign investment**



USAID Project Staff

*Inma agribusiness training specialist John Jeans delights young children at Erbil Food Exposition with a viewing of fresh carp from the tank installation. Inma, which means "growth" in Arabic, helps to improve the health and marketability of livestock and fish through better care, feed and technology.*

*Complementing USAID's other economic growth programs, Inma works in provinces to support the development of agribusinesses and agricultural markets, improving the livelihoods of farmers.*

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through its *Inma* Agribusiness Project opened doors to 200 business and agriculture professionals from around the globe, for the first time, at the Erbil Agro Food Expo in November 2008. The exposition demonstrated the Iraqi's commitment to attract foreign investment to the country, advancing U.S. government's efforts to bring economic opportunities and stability to the region.

Second in revenues only to the oil industry, Iraq's agriculture industry is the country's largest employer, accounting for more than a quarter of the national work force. With more than 100 Iraqi companies participating, the food exposition marked a significant step in the revival of a market-driven agricultural sector which will strengthen private businesses and increase employment opportunities.

Nearly 80,000 agribusiness developers, agronomists, farming and trade associations, agricultural students, and ministry officials attended the four-day event.

USAID Agriculture Advisor Michael Maxey said: "The food exposition offered an opportunity to create linkages between the Iraqi private sector and agricultural and food production companies around the world and stimulate investment and development in Iraq."

USAID's *Inma* Agribusiness Project is aimed at restoring the agriculture industry crippled by decades of neglect and decay. The project helps rebuild productive linkages among farmers, agribusinesses, financial services, and domestic and international markets that improve livelihoods of farmers and revitalize Iraq's agribusiness sector.

Since 2003, USAID has spent more than \$6 billion on programs designed to stabilize communities; foster economic and agricultural growth; and build the capacity of the national, local, and provincial governments to respond to the needs of Iraqis.